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NEWSBYTES

T-Birds release schedule

The U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron has announced its schedule for the 2000 show season.

Overall, the Thunderbirds will perform more than 60 demonstrations in 25 states, Canada and Europe.

The team is returning to Europe for the first time since 1996.

The show schedule is available at <http://www.nellis.af.mil/thunderbirds>.

Air Force partners with Millrose Games

The Air Force has purchased title rights to the Millrose Games, universally regarded as the world's most prestigious indoor track and field competition.

The one-day event takes place at Madison Square Garden, New York City, Feb. 4, and will be broadcast on NBC, Feb. 5. It is a cornerstone event of USA Track and Field's "Golden Spike Tour," an eight-city series of events featuring America's finest track and field athletes.

For further information on the United States Air Force Millrose Games, visit the USA Track and Field Web site at <http://www.usatf.org>

Reservists, training

Air Force reservists need to wait for instructions before using federal employee military leave to perform inactive duty for training.

The fiscal 2000 National Defense Authorization Act, signed by the president Oct. 5, authorizes the use of military leave for IDTs. However, two months later, the Air Force still awaits guidance from the Department of Defense to establish procedures for using military leave for IDTs.

AF works CEFIP delays

By Staff Sgt. Cynthia Miller
Headquarters United States Air Force

Enlisted aviators scheduled to enter the Career Enlisted Flyer Incentive Pay Program can expect to see their flight pay benefits, retroactive to Oct. 1, kick in over the next several weeks.

Since the announcement of the program in October, there has been a delay in implementation that has some members concerned.

Air Force Secretary Whit Peters said he has made ending the delays a top priority and is receiving near-daily updates on progress. "The delays are not acceptable and we are working to clear the backlog as quickly as possible," he said.

"The important things for people to know is that the problem has the attention of senior leaders and, equally important, no one will lose any money as a result of the delays."

"There are over 8,000 records that have to be hand scrubbed for entry into the pay system," said Capt. Shawna O'Brien, chief



Air Force boom operators will be affected by CEFIP.

of special pay and benefits at the Air Force compensation and entitlements office.

"For several months, base-level flight management offices have been working to identify eligible enlisted flyers and providing the listings to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service," she said.

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Military ID cards get smart

By Staff Sgt. Cynthia Miller
Headquarters United States Air Force

The standard United States military identification card will get a whole lot smarter when the Air Force implements use of a common access card late next year.

The smart card, under development for the past eight years, features an embedded microchip,



The Air Force plans an initial issue of 700,000 smart cards that have a read/write capability in December 2000.

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Letters to the editor

U.S. Air Force Online News publishes letters based on their appeal to an Air Force-wide audience each week. Send your letter to the U.S. Air Force Online News staff by completing the online form at <http://www.af.mil/newspaper/>

Due to the number of letters, not all letters can be published. Letters may be edited for grammar and length. Only letters accompanied by a valid name and email address will be considered.

Proud to serve

In reference to the commentary, "Being in the service means committing yourself to serve" [Dec. 1]; today's maintainers are already sharing their most precious commodity — time. ... Their contribution goes far beyond daily work to help ease worldwide tensions and provide humanitarian relief. ... a direct reflection of our "service before self" core value. When someone asks my occupation, ... "I proudly say that "I am a crew chief in the United States Air Force."

Staff Sgt. Sean Ames
Hill AFB, Utah

Nit-noids abound

I hear and read the same topic far too often — retention ... When I first started, it seemed doing your job was fun ... We worked hard at building teams, not talking about them. Now, our managers talk about teams and do little to actually build teams ... Perhaps people are working so hard at the nit-noids that they just want to go their separate ways at the end of the day. ... Money has very little to do with it. Perception of eroding benefits, promises not kept, too many managers and too few leaders, and nit-noids have everything to do with retention. One more point: When did the press and the court system start running our Air Force?

Robert W. Haas
Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.

Who are the leaders?

... "Where did everyone go?" [Dec. 1] had the right idea ... Maybe the time has come to find out who the so-called leaders of the Air Force really are. It's about time the Air Force started a program where supervisors are given an official review by their supervisors. I have had commanders, whose policy was, "I don't believe in giving people a second chance." ... until the higher ups realize they have middle management with ideas and beliefs like these, the problems will stay and the people will leave instead of the other way around.

Bob Usher
Osan AB, Republic of Korea

The right decision

The Air Force was correct in pulling its advertisements from World Wrestling Federation TV programs ["Bowling to pressure," Dec. 1]. ... The WWF has committed to clean up their act in regards to language and violence and the message they are sending to America's youth. Even the WWF realized they had gone too far. If we tell our youth we support violence, we are giving them a license to hurt or even kill as they see fit. The Air Force sets high standards, not only for its members, but also for the nation. ...

Curt Olesneovich
Tinker AFB, Okla.

Air Force Y2K: money in the bank

By Robert F. Hale
*Assistant Secretary of the Air Force
Financial Management and Comptroller*

Lately it seems that you can't turn on the television or read a newspaper without seeing some story about possible Y2K computer problems. The Air Force has worked this issue hard and is well prepared for the year 2000. And speaking for the Air Force financial community, I can assure you that the accuracy and timeliness of your pay will not be affected by Y2K.

As the new millennium approaches, you may wonder whether the Y2K bug will somehow cause problems with your pay or allotments to your family or other important groups. I can assure you that all the hardware and software that supports your pay is Y2K-ready and has been

tested and retested. This applies to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, which handles DoD pay, as well as to pay systems at your base and throughout the Air Force.

To further ensure that your pay goes through as scheduled, key agencies have developed contingency plans. For example, you might ask what happens if some basic utility, such as electricity or communications, somewhere in that chain of systems breaks down because of the Y2K bug, or if severe weather problems add to any Y2K problems. Will I still get paid? The answer is "yes"!

For each such contingency every organization that plays a role in your pay has continuity of operations plans including backup generators or electricity. The Defense Finance and Accounting

Service also has the necessary backup pay files.

In addition, all key organizations will also be staffed over the New Year's weekend to respond quickly to any situation. There will be sufficient cash available at base financial institutions, the base exchange, clubs and the commissary to accommodate your check cashing needs. Arrangements have been put in place to provide special cash to bases in the event of any unexpected disruptions.

If it would make you feel better over the New Year's weekend, you could have a couple of days of extra cash in your pocket and some extra groceries on the shelf. But, as I said, you should rest assured the Air Force will continue to be able to fly, fight, win and pay its people in the year 2000 and beyond.



A Galaxy of versatility



Photo by Staff Sgt. Pachari Lutke

Special operators like these are finding the C-5 Galaxy to be a versatile tool in their operations.

Night Riders C-5 lumbers into special ops mission

By Staff Sgt. Pachari Lutke
Headquarters United States Air Force

In the special operations world, the element of surprise is paramount and darkness is an advantage. This is especially true for the "Night Riders" of the 436th Airlift Wing at Dover Air Force Base, Del., who perform their mission in complete darkness.

An even bigger surprise is the aircraft the 436th uses for its night missions. One hardly thinks of the lumbering C-5, the largest aircraft in the Air Force inventory, as sneaking into enemy territory. You can hardly miss a plane almost as long as a football field, and as high as a 6-story building, dropping in from overhead.

But the 436th says that it can and has been done. As the only C-5 Special Operations Unit in the world, their specialty is the Special Operations Low Level II missions. The roman numerals denote use of night vision goggles.

"Who would ever expect a C-

5 to be doing this type of mission?" said Lt. Col. Jim Mills, chief of wing special capabilities at Dover. "I can't go into details, but we have been involved in operations in the past."

The generic answer to how long the C-5 special ops program has been going on is since the mid-1980s. However, it's not well-known around the Air Force that the C-5 plays a part in special operations — aircraft such as the C-130 and C-141 are more apt to come to mind in that context. But it's the heavy lift capability that makes the C-5 valuable in the special ops world.

"The difference with the C-5 is you get the range. With a C-5, fully loaded, you can still fly; approximately a three-thousand mile mission," Colonel Mills said.

"Only the best and the brightest get into the 436th, he said. "And rightly so. When flying blacked out missions at 500 feet, there's no room for error."

This article available in its entirety online.

Law change affects reservists' 'forgotten widows'

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — The last of the Reserve components' "forgotten widows" are now eligible for the two-year-old Annuities for Certain Military Surviving Spouses benefit.

The fiscal 2000 Defense Authorization Act removes an inequity written into Section 644 of the fiscal 1998 Defense Authorization Act, which created the benefit.

"Forgotten widows" describes widows and widowers previously ineligible for survivor annuities because their retirement-qualified military spouse died before having the chance to enroll in the active duty Survivor Benefit Plan, created in 1972, or

the Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan, created in 1978.

The fiscal 1998 law said retirement-qualified reservists had to have died between Sept. 21, 1972, and Oct. 1, 1978, for their surviving spouses to be eligible. The fiscal 2000 change removes the 1972 date.

Eligibility criteria now for the Annuities for Certain Military Surviving Spouses benefit are that the deceased reservist must have been eligible for reserve retired pay at age 60 by having completed at least 20 qualifying years of service, must have been married to the applicant on the date of death, and must have died before Oct. 1, 1978.

Benefit rules that affect surviving spouses of active-duty retirees are unchanged. The applicable date of the member's death remains "before Mar. 21, 1974."

Benefits are not automatic. Eligible surviving spouses must apply and provide supporting documents. Those disapproved for benefits under the previous law who now qualify must reapply. Applicants approved under the new law are entitled to monthly annuities of \$174.76, retroactive to Oct. 1.

For more information, applications and help, contact the retirement services office of the nearest military installation. (*Courtesy of U.S. Army Personnel Command*)



ID cards get smarter thanks to technology

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a magnetic strip and a bar code.

These features will allow the card to access various data sources, computer network systems, and to be used for building entry. The new card will remain color-coded.

"We are on track for issuing the first smart cards in late 2000," said Craig Wade, an Air Force representative in the Department of Defense Access Card Office.

"But we still have a lot of things to be worked out — like figuring out what, beyond basic demographic information such as name, rank and social security number — they [the Air Force] want to put on the card. There are a couple of different timelines being

looked at, but you can say, without a shadow of a doubt, that by mid-2002 all active duty members will have smart cards."

Smart cards aren't a new technology. They have been issued to Air Force Academy cadets and new recruits at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, for the past four years ...

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Beyond the convenience of eliminating the need for special access badges and building passes, the smart card's application toward mobility should reduce processing time from three or four hours to 40 minutes.

According to Susan O'Neal, director of plans and integration for deployment, the smart card will access a service member's mobility training records, shot records, power of attorney authority, etc., with a single swipe, and will automatically generate a mo-

detts and new recruits at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, for the past four years, but were limited to performing specific functions.

The new cards, according to Col. Bernie Skoch, director of chief information office support, are like computers in general.

"If you go back and historically look at computer applications, they were very limited," he said. "But if you look at where computers are used now, they're everywhere, and no one could have predicted that. In many respects smart card technology is like that."

The colonel predicts the smart card of the future will be issued upon entrance into the Air Force and will last throughout a career.

"You will have one smart card that carries you forever," he said. "It will have all your personnel and medical information on it, you'll log onto your computer networks with it, it'll verify that you're an authorized purchaser at the base supply store and automatically charge your unit's account. When you PCS, the in- and out-processing checklists will be built into the card."

AF works to resolve flight enlisted pay delay

Continued from Page 1

She added that "because the transactions to DFAS have to be worked manually at both locations, it takes time and effort to complete required processes to load everyone into the pay system.

"The current plan is for enlisted flyers receiving hazardous or special duty pay to continue to receive it until CEFIP kicks in. Most importantly, CEFIP will be paid retroactive to 1 Oct 99," said Captain O'Brien.

CEFIP combines two current incentive pays, Hazardous Duty Incentive Pay and Special Duty Assignment Pay, into a single incentive pay for career enlisted aviators.

"CEFIP is a long-fought-for benefit for our career enlisted aviators, which recognizes the hazardous nature of their job," said Lt. Col. Susan Cooley, chief, compensation and entitlements, headquarters Air Force.

The program provides an incentive to attract and retain members

in aviation specialties and was approved for more than 8,000 career enlisted flyers. They are now eligible to receive continuous flight incentive pay, based on their years of aviation service, as long as they meet the prescribed operational flying gate requirements.

Patterned after the officers' Aviation Career Incentive Pay program, CEFIP is paid continuously, even when the member is assigned to non-flight status positions.

CEFIP is only one of several new pay and entitlements authorized in the fiscal 2000 National Defense Authorization Act that must be worked by DFAS.

"This year's NDAA represents the most significant change to military pay and compensation in the history of the Air Force," said Captain O'Brien. "DFAS and the Air Force have been working closely together for the past several weeks to resolve this situation as quickly as possible."

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